

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

We all know the Kurds and others in Kobane, Syria, defeated the fighters of ISIS. What is less known is that Kobane is undergoing a major revolution in the way they organise themselves. A revolution to rival any of those of the Arab Spring.

The Kurds in an area known as Rojava, which includes Kobane, decided that decisions should be made from the “bottom up” rather than “top down”. This means people meet locally to decide what needs to happen.

But let’s go back a step. In 2004, an uprising in Qamishli, Syria, began. Many protestors were arrested, tortured, and “disappeared” in the prisons or elsewhere. Many are still missing today. Kurdish resistance continued and in 2012 they finally took over Rojava when Bashar al-Assad’s forces withdrew. Rojava means “western” in Kurdish, as in Western Kurdistan. And along the Syrian-Turkish

WHO WE ARE

In 1991, Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG) emerged from the Anti-Poll Tax campaign, formed by Haringey residents with a wide range of backgrounds and views. We wanted to create a long-term, vibrant, non-hierarchical group, unlike political parties where ambitions and posturing displace real politics.

We believe in ridding ourselves of the current system which places profit and power before people’s needs. This involves getting organised, fighting back and collectively taking those decisions which affect our daily lives, communities and workplaces.

We think people must take control of their community and workplace struggles, support each other, encourage practical solidarity, build the necessary skills and knowledge for those struggles and generate strong, permanent, grassroots networks.

Many of us are involved with local residents’, community and campaign groups within the borough. We support workers in dispute, campaigns against public service cuts and threatened community amenities. We are active on environmental, housing and claimants’ issues and resist oppressive policing and state controls.

We encourage everyone to share their views at our open, monthly meetings where consensus is the aim. We would welcome your involvement, either as an individual or a campaign group, at our meetings and discussion evenings and with practical activities including distributing this newsletter and producing other materials including posters and leaflets.

If you would like to learn more about HSG, then visit www.haringey.org.uk, friend us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter @hsg_, post to PO Box 2474, London N8, phone 0845 2235 270 or email info@haringev.org.uk

border in northern Syria, there are three areas not physically connected to each another. These three zones make up Rojava and are autonomous (free) zones from the rest of Syria.

Rojavans formed the Tev-Dam, (the Movement of the Democracy Society) to bring everyone together. Tev-Dam was incredibly inclusive and tried to cover every major issue in society. But rather than just a Kurdish revolution, people knew that everyone should be involved in decision making, including Arab, Muslim, Christian, Assyrian and Yazidi.

The first task was to establish a variety of groups and committees in the streets, neighbourhoods, villages and towns everywhere. These groups’ role was to discuss and decide upon all the issues facing society. Groups were set up to look at: women’s rights, economic, environmental, education, health and care issues, trade and business, relations with foreign countries and many more. There are even groups set up to reconcile disagreements between different people, groups or factions.

Groups meet to discuss problems people have where they live. They then come together in the villages or towns in a larger group called the “House of the People”. Every group or committee has two representatives and one must always be a woman.

Tev-Dam realised these areas needed to come together for making bigger decisions. So in January 2014, they set up the Democratic Self Administration (DSA) to implement and execute decisions from the “House of the People”. Almost half the 22 representatives are women. It’s organized so people from different backgrounds, nationalities, religions and genders can all participate.

We all saw that women took up arms to fight ISIS. But the revolution is not just about picking up weapons. Other important



changes for women have been introduced including: girls under 18 can’t be married off; women’s and children’s rights must be recognized, protected and implemented; female circumcision is banned; equality between men and women. There are many other radical policies which would shame any “democratic” western government.

Although this revolution faces threats from a number of places it is still progressing and growing. It’s also received much needed solidarity from people around the world.

We know movements and human struggles which launch a social revolution, rather than just a political revolution, are scarce and social revolutions happened in very few countries. In spite of this these revolutions are still shining examples for us all. They remind us that either a revolution must be social or it does not exist as a revolution. Rojava demonstrates that it’s possible, even with a war going on, to fight back and change the present system to a better one. We wish them every success.

For more see: <http://libcom.org/news/experiment-west-kurdistan-syrian-kurdistan-has-proved-people-can-make-changes-zaher-baher-2>

THREE CHEERS FOR THE ANNIE

Many thousands of local pubs across the country have closed over the past two decades - sold for housing, supermarkets and betting shops. One that has bucked this trend is the Antwerp Arms in Tottenham. Situated next to Bruce Castle Park the building was under threat from a property developer until local people developed a plan to buy it.

Through campaigning, fundraising and grants the Antwerp Arms Association were able to buy the building. It re-opened earlier this year as a community pub and has been refurbished by those involved in the Association.

It aims to be a focal point and a vibrant resource for the local community, encourages people to become involved in its running and has planned a series of events over the next few months.

As a plaque on a bench in the nearby Tottenham Cemetery proclaims ‘Why are you sitting here - The Annie’s Open!’

EVICTION - PAH, I DON’T THINK SO

In Spain, like here, banks are repossessing huge numbers of homes and evicting owners. Just because people couldn’t keep paying their mortgages, children and old people are forced onto the streets by banks, judges, politicians and cops.

Pissed off with this, Spaniards formed PAH (Platform for those Affected by Mortgages) in 2009. Enough was enough. They weren’t prepared to watch friends, family and neighbours evicted through no fault of their own. A home is a basic right we are all entitled to no matter if you rent, own or squat it.

PAH use civil disobedience and direct action. Local people gather

when people are being evicted to stop cops and bailiffs removing them. In 2013, there were on average 184 eviction attempts per day. PAH are so successful they now have over 200 groups throughout Spain and by October 2014 stopped 1135 evictions. That’s 1135 families not living on the streets. Even some cops and locksmiths refuse to help with the evictions.

But PAH is more than just about stopping evictions. They have three main objectives: write off all mortgage debt when banks repossess a property, stop evictions, and turn mortgaged homes into affordable rental properties.

To further achieve these aims PAH

occupy the banks of those facing repossession until the bank agrees to re-negotiate the mortgage or write off their debt. They also fight to convert homes owned by the banks into social rental housing. But they also re-occupy (squat) buildings taken by the banks and re-house evicted families.

PAH is really inspiring and something we will need to copy now the Tories are in power and threatening massive austerity measures and cuts. To find out more about PAH and get inspired by how it works, Haringey Independent Cinema (HIC) are screening a film about them on Thursday 16th July.

More on HIC: haringey.org.uk/hic
PAH (in Spanish): afectadosporlahipoteca.com

TOTALLY INDYPENDENT

Newsletter of Haringey Solidarity Group
www.haringey.org.uk

“What crime is robbing a bank, compared to owning one?” - Bertolt Brecht

COUNCIL TO DEMOLISH BROADWATER FARM

Have Haringey Council gone totally mad? Thousands are homeless yet Haringey plan to demolish or sell council housing we desperately need. They’re demolishing part of Love Lane estate for a “walkway” for Spurs. Tunnel Gardens is next. But the scheme to knock down Broadwater Farm estate is pure madness.

We thought this was a bad joke. But the idea is seriously being discussed. And it’s not just the estate they intend to destroy. Plans include turning part of Lordship Recreation Ground (the Rec) into a building site for years and concreting over the football pitches. They’re also planning to demolish housing, some privately owned, nearby.

1200 families live on Broadwater Farm. Millions have been spent on improving housing and more improvements are still needed. Millions have also been spent on improving the Rec where hundreds of volunteers put in thousands of hours of their free

time. Broadwater United turned wasteland into sport facilities that hundreds of us have used for years. Eleven football teams presently use this space.

At an angry April meeting 150 people heard the Council’s ideas - some for the first time. People assumed they would be moved back into new flats, but were shocked to hear large amounts of the new housing would be sold and they may be moved to who knows where?

Homeowners will be priced out of the area. Three-bedroom flats on the farm sell for £200,000. But one-bedroom flats on the Lawrence Road development are £300,000.

People demanded not one blade of grass on the park or pitches should be touched. A coalition of groups formed to fight these

shameful plans. These included the residents association, Friends of Lordship Rec, Broadwater United, residents and supporters of the threatened homes.

We support any campaign to stop the Farm being demolished and new homes built which will only benefit property developers and yuppies. We need to protect social housing and the

communities we have built up. We need secure housing for all and green spaces.

Stand with the Farm residents and the users of the Rec, and if that means standing in front of bulldozers - we will be there.

For more information to stop these stupid plans contact bwflordship@gmail.com



DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

Benefits are a right and are paid for through our National Insurance contributions. These rights are being trashed under the lie that austerity is necessary - though not austerity for the filthy rich. But it’s not just about money; it’s also about control.

The Tory government have more benefit cuts planned. They are intent on killing the poor and the vulnerable.

Consider the results of austerity so far. While the price of food and housing are still rising, the benefit

cap will be further reduced from £26,000 to £23,000. In the last 18 months, over 50,000 households have had their benefits capped - nearly half of them in London. This means more parents going to foodbanks (limited to just 18 days’ food per year) and more children not getting fresh fruit and veg.

When you’re living on the border of poverty, a small drop in income can tip you over the edge. In 2012, JobCentre bosses warned of the risk of suicides among benefit claimants, yet the rate of

sanctioning was stepped up. During 2014 over 900,000 JSA claimants had benefit sanctions. In March a government committee announced that 40 people had committed suicide because of problems with welfare payments. That number is just the tip of the iceberg.

In future, you’ll be forced to obey doctor’s orders, whatever the side-effects, or you’ll starve! Here’s a quote from the 2015 Tory Manifesto: “People who might benefit from treatment should get the medical help they need so they

can return to work. If they refuse a recommended treatment, we will review whether their benefits should be reduced.”

The sanctions and the suicides will continue, until enough people say “Enough!” But don’t drown in your despair. When you hear anyone talking about “benefit scroungers” tell them to .. stop reading The Mail and find out what’s really happening. Our rights that were fought for are being eroded, but we can win them back again if we support and defend each other.

NO BORDERS

Hundreds of thousands of people are attempting to escape the horrors of war, repression and poverty in Syria, Yemen and Eritrea. Hundreds have drowned in the Mediterranean as they try to reach what they believe is safety in Europe. Even more



WHOSE ST ANN'S? OUR ST ANN'S!

After years of arguments, objections, phoney consultations and, finally, a nod and a wink from Haringey Council earlier this year, Barnet, Haringey and Enfield Mental Health Trust (BHEMHT) now have outline planning permission to build 470 homes on two-thirds of the St. Ann's hospital site.

Over the years, health facilities on the site have been deliberately run down with BHEMHT planning to revamp very limited services in one corner of the site. The remainder could be sold to a private developer who will make millions in profit on former public land.

Protest groups and residents argued long and hard that the NHS had no right to sell the land without first completing a needs assessment of the health requirements of Haringey's 250,000 residents. No need, said BHEMHT, the land is surplus to requirements. So this is what the major political parties mean when they tell us that, "the NHS is safe in our hands"!

All over Tottenham new housing developments are springing up, with the cheapest properties, one-bedroom flats, starting at £250,000. These homes are well beyond the reach of local residents. In fact, many will never become secure homes. They will be sources of unearned income for grasping, greedy landlords whilst insecure tenants worry about their future.

The regulations regarding housing development on former public land are quite explicit. The Greater London Authority (GLA) suggests a minimum of 50% should be affordable and/ or social housing for rent. Haringey Council approved a plan with just 14% affordable housing of which 30% will be socially rented - 20 homes out of 470. Reasoned objections were brushed aside and our elected representatives were, once again, found to be in the pocket of corporate interests.

Well, even if the battle over planning

are condemned to live in refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan as the conflicts in Syria and Iraq widen with no end in sight.

What has been the response of Europe to the biggest refugee crisis in recent memory? As usual, pathetic. Although the EU has announced plans to take up to 20,000 asylum seekers and will attempt to distribute them across Europe there is still a 'Fortress Europe' stance

towards 'economic migrants' and plans to return them to their country of origin. This is absurd - they are coming to Europe because there is no safe place for them to be where they came from. Economic migration is a fact of life - everyone in Britain is probably descended from someone who came to this country to better their lives and we depend on immigration to keep our vital public services working.

Britain's stance is even tougher. Despite claims to have returned to 'compassionate conservatism' Theresa May, the Home Secretary, has revealed the true nature of the Tories as the Nasty Party. Mention the phrases 'asylum seekers' and 'economic migrants' and she pulls the drawbridge up even further. Not only does she refuse to accept any part of the EU proposals but has sent warships to the Med to destroy any boats being used to carry people to Europe. This is no solution for the migrants - they will be forced to find even more dangerous ways to make the journey and many more will die in the process.

And let's not forget Britain's role in this - from the legacy of oppressive colonialisation, the illegal war in Iraq and bombing in Libya and Syria. Surely Britain must accept some responsibility?

This life threatening migration isn't going to end any time soon. The response should focus on human rights and asylum and not the 'keep 'em out approach' that has cost so many lives and caused so much suffering.

A WOLF IN LAMMY'S CLOTHING

It was no great surprise to see David Lammy returned as MP for Tottenham. However, the first year of his tenure will be wasted competing in this year's 'Which Blair Project' - campaigning for the Labour candidacy for London Mayor. Lammy's campaign is receiving significant financial backing from US property developers Cain Hoy, who (alongside eyeing up a takeover of Spurs) have in recent years invested over £1bn in the capital, including major gentrification projects.

Given plans for the demolition of council homes in our borough, you must question whether this relationship is likely to benefit the people of Haringey. Many of us already struggle to cope with rising rents as a consequence of creeping gentrification.

Our 'representative' in Parliament has his eyes on a larger prize, and neither he nor his new friends can be trusted to have our interests at heart.

NO WINNERS HERE

On Thursday 7th May 2015, the Conservatives won a 12-seat majority in the House of Commons. Labour won only 232 seats - 99 less than the Conservatives - whilst the Lib Dems were punished for entering into coalition with the Conservatives after the last election; they won just eight seats compared to 57 in 2010.

In Scotland, the Scottish National Party won 56 out of a possible 59 seats, many of which they took from Labour who were seen to have failed Scottish people.

Amongst the huge changes and upheavals brought about by this election, we can come to a number of conclusions. The first is that the Labour Party is dead. It no longer represents the working class of Britain (it hasn't for a very long time) and, as the general election results show, they can no longer win enough votes to command a majority in parliament. Since the days of New Labour, the Labour Party has attempted to win support from several different groups of voters: those in Scotland; the working class in the post-industrial North; and the middle class in the South/South East. Labour's whole election campaign this year attempted to appeal to all of these groups, and as can be seen in the outcome of the election this strategy did not work.

Though it may seem the Conservatives capitalised on Labour's losses, they received only 6.5% more votes than Labour, improving by only 0.8% on their 2010 performance. In simpler terms, they won a clear majority in parliament with just a minuscule improvement on their 2010 result.

What's more, only 24% of those eligible to vote actually voted for the Conservatives; they are now governing with the approval of less than one quarter of the population. They have no mandate to enact harsh austerity, and so we must fight back.

In fact, the whole election was fought by all the main parties accepting the 'need' for austerity. The Conservatives, Labour, the Lib Dems and (despite their anti-austerity rhetoric) the SNP all outlined plans for austerity in their manifestoes. Those who oppose austerity, many of whom have been affected badly by it, had no voice.

A majority Conservative government was the worst possible outcome of this election, but it must be remembered that all major parties were wedded to cutbacks and austerity. We must continue to fight back against this savage ideological agenda and stop the government's attack on the working class.

FREE SHILAN OZCELIK

On 16th January 2015, 18 year-old Shilan Ozcelik was arrested at Stansted Airport on suspicion of travelling to northern Syria to support the YPJ (Kurdish Women's Defense Units) in their fight against ISIS.

That same month, Kurdish fighters liberated Kobane from the hands of ISIS, for which the international community applauded them.

Why such a contradiction? The British state warns us of the threat posed by ISIS yet, at the same time, is criminalising Ozcelik for wanting to provide humanitarian aid to those on the frontline against ISIS. This contradiction is explained by the West's fear of the PKK and of Kurdish empowerment. However, the YPJ is not listed as a terrorist organisation by the British government, further challenging the decision to charge Ozcelik under the 2006 Terrorism Act.

On 1st April, at an Old Bailey court hearing, Shilan Ozcelik was refused bail and told she will remain in Holloway Prison until a full hearing on 7th September.

Ozcelik's aim was to aid the Kurds in their defence against ISIS. As friends and family of Ozcelik have argued, she poses no threat to the British state, so why has she been imprisoned?

It is crucial we do all we can to challenge Ozcelik's imprisonment and ensure she is released safely. Support the campaign for her release by getting involved with the Peace in Kurdistan Campaign, or write to Shilan via her solicitor at: Av. Ali Has, Morgan Has Solicitors, 1st & 2nd Floor Bank Chambers, 133 Stoke Newington High Street, London N16 0PH

HOUSING - BUT NOT FOR ALL

Haringey Council plan to build 10,000 new homes over the next 15 years to meet demands set down by the Mayor of London. You might think that's a good thing, but the devil is in the detail. One area of redevelopment stretches from Love Lane to Tottenham Hale as part of the Tottenham Area Action Plan.

Although the council denies that their plans will lead to social cleansing, all the evidence points to exactly that conclusion.

The plans include homes for sale on the private market, shared ownership and intermediate housing for rent which for many local people is simply unaffordable.

Where is the much needed council housing?

Private sector rents are sky high and rising, and will inevitably lead to people trying to find cheaper accommodation outside the borough.

An initial demolition notice has been served on the Love Lane estate where 297 homes are under threat.

KEEP VOLUNTEERING VOLUNTARY

For five long years a top priority of the previous government was to humiliate, demonise and punish those on benefits. A major target was the unemployed, simply because they were unemployed and unfortunate enough to have no other source of income. Over those years, workfare schemes, where the unemployed are forced to work for their benefits, have become increasingly vicious. Following the election, that ain't about to change.

Currently, tens of thousands have been forced on to the hated Community Work Placement scheme. Regardless of their physical or mental well-being and skills, claimants are forced to work for 30 hours a week for 6 months, most commonly in a charity shop. Any objection, questioning or the slightest stepping out of line may result in sanctions: the stopping of benefits for a minimum of 3 weeks.

Haringey Solidarity Group has been working in solidarity with our unemployed brothers and sisters for

months and campaigning against this particular scheme. G4S, the greedy bastards who grab huge government grants and promptly fiddle as much as they can, run the scheme across much of the country. In Haringey they sub-contract it out to a firm called Urban Futures. We have been at the gates of this company weekly offering our support to claimants on the scheme. Frequently they have reported bullying and abusive tactics used by Urban Futures staff to whip claimants into line. Those tactics appear to have softened since we occupied their offices last year. (View on HSG website: haringey.org.uk)

Our main focus is on those charities which use the 6-month workfare placements. It seems quite bizarre to us that charities established to help those in need should then exploit the unemployed, who under the frequently-used sanctions regime, often end up destitute and dependent upon foodbanks. Our activities outside Traid in Wood Green quickly encouraged them to

leave the scheme. And on discovering a Marie Curie shop using the scheme, a few phone calls around their senior management put an end to that. Perhaps the charity with the biggest stake locally is North London Hospice. They have 18 shops across north London and could be using as many as 50 claimants in those shops. We have been picketing them every weekend for months and, after discussions with the charity's executives, we find we are having an impact as they are promising to leave the scheme.

We all know that the government will continue their vindictive tactics as if the unemployed were to blame for the failings of capitalism, rather than being the victims. We need to stand together and defend each other. Our campaign can and does make a difference. If we can put enough pressure on these charities to force them to pull out, the scheme will collapse. Why not join us? Sticking it to the government and its hated workfare schemes is not only good fun - it's good for us all.



LET'S LYNCH THE LANDLORDS

We are in the midst of a housing crisis that is seeing many Londoners being forced out of the capital due to rising costs and reduced benefits, while those who remain have to put up with poor conditions and a lack of security. But in Haringey and all across the city, residents are responding by organising housing groups to support each other, oppose the social cleansing of our communities and make housing about need not profit.

Whether it be estate demolitions, dodgy private landlords or the council failing to house people properly, these problems are happening in every London borough and need a city-wide response. If we don't want to see a city only for the rich, we need to support campaigns wherever they appear.

If you're interested in starting to change our crazy housing market, there will likely be a group wherever

you live. See details below for how to get involved, but this list is just for starters and doesn't include many of the estate-specific campaigns that are taking place across London.

Haringey Housing Action Group
haringeyhousingaction.org.uk

Radical Housing Network (cross-London)
radicalhousingnetwork.org

Hackney DIGs
hackneyrenters.org

Housing Action Southwark and Lambeth (HASL)
housingactionsouthwarkandlambeth.wordpress.com

Camden Resists
camdenresists.wordpress.com

Tower Hamlets Renters
towerhamletsrenters.wordpress.com

Focus E15 (Newham)
focuse15.org